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**EXAMINING WOMEN'S CAREER PROGRESSION  
BARRIERS**



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UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA  
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# **EXAMINING WOMEN'S CAREER PROGRESSION BARRIERS**



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**Thesis Submitted to  
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Management**



**Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan  
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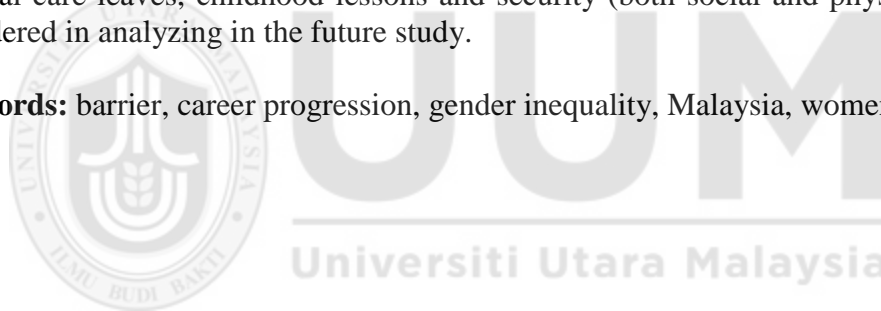


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## ABSTRACT

It is been half a century women's progression in professional career has been in a debate. Yet today, only scant percent of women are able to make their way at leadership and decision making positions at higher education institutions across the globe. However, women career in higher education has been of little concern to researchers. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between gender stereotype, work-family conflict, social-cultural beliefs, individual characteristics and organizational support with women's career progression barriers among female staffs in a public university in Malaysia. This quantitative approach research has collected data from 264 female staffs of a public university using questionnaire survey. The study analyzes collected data utilizing Pearson correlation and multiple regression model to identify the relationship and test the hypothesis. The findings of the study reveal that gender stereotype, work-family conflict, and organizational support significantly influence the career progression barriers of female staffs. On the other hand, social-cultural beliefs and individual characteristics found to have an insignificant association, thus it does not affect career progression barriers of women staffs. This finding is believed to be logical in the context of Malaysia since it is a very inclusive and liberal nation. Finally, the study suggests that parental care leaves, childhood lessons and security (both social and physical) could be considered in analyzing in the future study.

**Keywords:** barrier, career progression, gender inequality, Malaysia, women



## ABSTRAK

Telah lebih setengah abad isu perkembangan wanita dalam kerjaya profesional telah diperdebatkan. Namun kini, hanya beberapa peratusan kecil sahaja wanita berjaya mendapat tempat dalam kedudukan kepimpinan dan pembuatan keputusan di institusi pengajian tinggi serta universiti di seluruh dunia. Bagaimana pun, perkembangan kerjaya wanita dalam institusi pengajian tinggi mendapatkan tarikan pengkaji terdahulu. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan antara faktor stereotaip gender, konflik kerja-keluarga, kepercayaan sosial-budaya, ciri-ciri individu dan sokongan organisasi dengan halangan dalam perkembangan kerjaya dalam kalangan pekerja wanita di sebuah universiti awam Malaysia. Pendekatan penyelidikan kuantitatif telah digunakan dalam mengumpul data daripada 264 pekerja wanita dari sebuah universiti awam dengan menggunakan kaedah soal selidik. Data kajian yang telah dikumpulkan di analisa menggunakan pendekatan korelasi Pearson dan model regresi berganda untuk mengenal pasti hubungan dan menguji hipotesis kajian. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa stereotaip gender, konflik kerja-keluarga, dan sokongan organisasi mempengaruhi perkembangan kerjaya yang lebih perlahan dalam kalangan pekerja wanita. Sebaliknya, kepercayaan sosial-budaya dan ciri-ciri individu didapati mempunyai hubungan yang tidak signifikan dengan perkembangan kerjaya dalam kalangan responden. Penemuan ini boleh dipercayai dalam konteks Malaysia kerana negara ini adalah sebuah negara yang sangat inklusif dan liberal. Akhir sekali, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa cuti untuk menjaga ibu bapa, pembelajaran kanak-kanak dan keselamatan (sosial dan fizikal) boleh dipertimbangkan dalam kajian di masa depan.

**Kata kunci:** halangan, perkembangan kerjaya, ketidaksamaan gender, Malaysia, wanita

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronyms	Descriptions
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GS	Gender stereotype
IC	Individual characteristics
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OS	Organizational support
SCB	Social cultural beliefs
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VIF	Variance of Inflation Factor
WCP	Women career progression
WFC	Work-family conflict

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Women's progression in the workplace has taken significant strides in the past 50 years (Carr, Gunn, Kaplan, Raj, & Freund, 2015; O'Meara, 2015; Schwanke, 2013). In the 1980s, the popular press, including *The Wall Street Journal* and *Adweek*, were among the first who began utilizing the term the "glass ceiling," in which reporters noted that, despite 15 years after gender discrimination was made illegal in some places, professional women were remain unable in climbing to senior positions (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011).

Among many other organizations, currently, women in higher education are still underrepresented in senior level administrative positions in college campuses (Jawahar & Hemmasi, 2006). Despite newly developed and suggested mentoring programs, professional development and leadership preparation, women in academia are still not getting along at the same pace as their male counterparts (Catherine Ehrich, 1994, 1995; Quinlan, 1999; Stanford-Blair & Dickmann, 2005).

Women persist bunched in low-level positions, midlevel administrative positions or positions more outlying to upgrade into central management, such as librarians and student services (Amey & Eddy, 2002). The term "glass roof" was minted in the early 1980s in reference to artificial barriers to the promotion of women and people of color which prevent them from rising to administrative offices in higher academia (Hymnowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; Oakley, 2000). In a study of female's in low-

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## APPENDIX

### Normality Test

The outputs of normal Q-Q plot are presented in the following Figure A.1 to A.5.

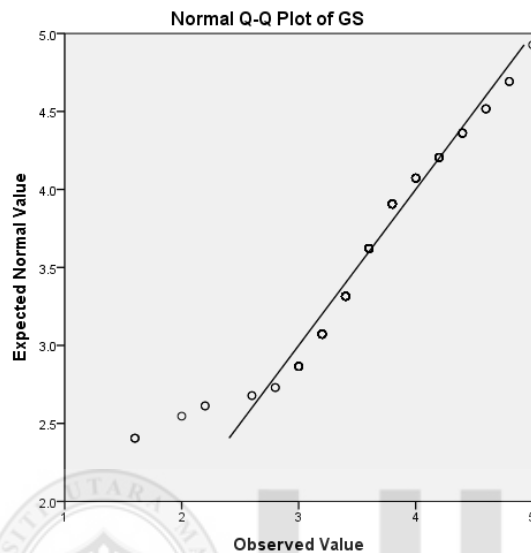


Figure A.1  
*The Normality of items in gender stereotype*

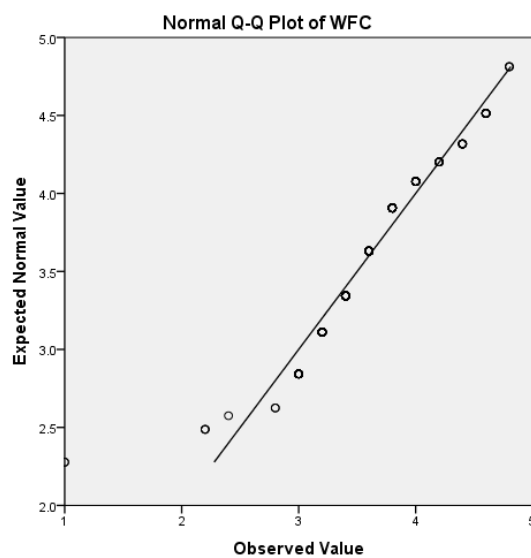


Figure A.2  
*The Normality of items in work-family conflict*

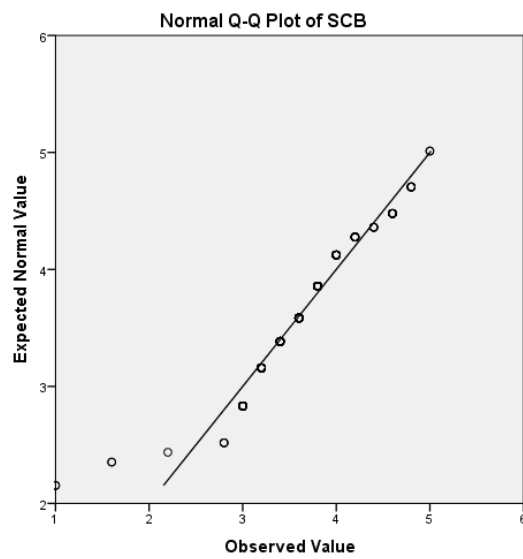


Figure A.3  
*The Normality of items in social cultural beliefs*

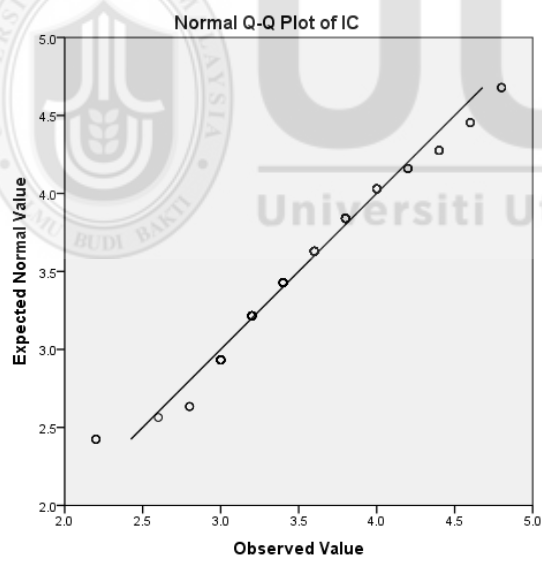


Figure A.4  
*The Normality of items in individual characteristics*

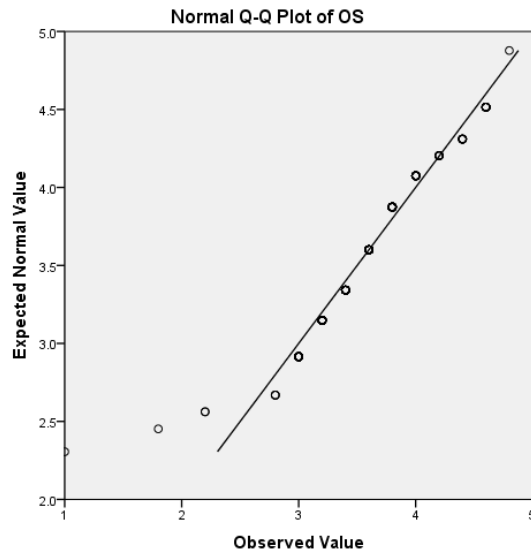


Figure A.5  
*The Normality of items in organizational support*

Moreover, histogram and normal probability plot (P-P) of the regression standardized residual also presents in Figur A.6 and Figur A.7 respectively.

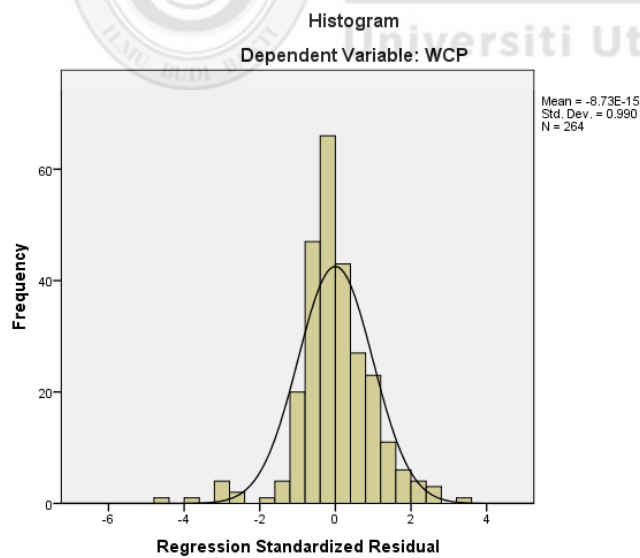


Figure A.6  
*The histogram of regression standardized residual*

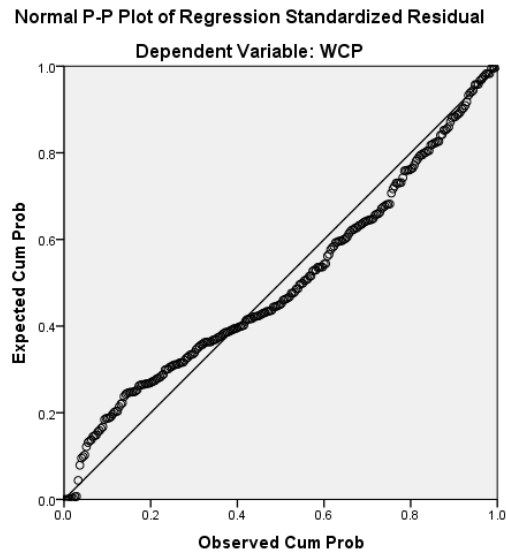


Figure A.7  
*The probability plot of regression standardized residual*

### Homoscedasticity

The Scatterplot explains homoscedasticity in the regression model. Figure A.8 illustrates the Scatterplot of the model.

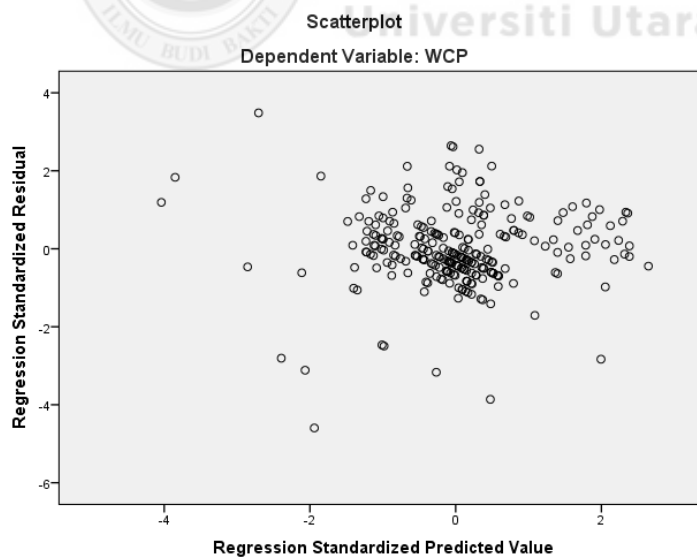


Figure A.8  
*The Scatterplot of the model*



## **SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE:**

### **EXAMINING WOMEN'S CAREER PROGRESSION BARRIERS**

Dear Sir/Madam/Dr./Prof.,

This survey aims to examine women's career progression barriers at workplace, particularly at higher education institutions. The information obtained from this survey is very important for the researcher to meet the objective of the study in fulfilling the requirement for Master Degree in Human Resources Management at Universiti Utara Malaysia.

This survey questionnaire consists of following sections:

Respondents Profile

Section A: Gender stereotype

Section B: Work-family conflict

Section C: Social cultural beliefs

Section D: Individual characteristics

Section E: Organizational support

Section F: Women's career progression barriers

Kindly answer all the questions. This questionnaire will take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. All information will be treated with strict confidence and your responses will only be analyzed in aggregate forms.

Your kind participation in this study is highly valued and appreciated. Should you have any enquiries regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact Tasnuva Alam at [tasnuva.alam15@gmail.com](mailto:tasnuva.alam15@gmail.com).

Yours Sincerely,

<b>Tasnuva Alam</b> Master student in HRM School of Business Management Universiti Utara Malaysia	<b>Supervisor</b> <b>Dr. Zuraida Binti Hassan</b> Senior Lecturer School of Business Management Universiti Utara Malaysia
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### Respondents Profile

Academic college		
	College 1	[ ]
	College 2	[ ]
	College 3	[ ]
Position occupied		
	Technical and support	[ ]
	Administration	[ ]
	Managerial	[ ]
	Academic	[ ]
Job Level		
	Beginning	[ ]
	Mid-level	[ ]
	Top-level	[ ]
Education Level		
	Diploma	[ ]
	Bachelor	[ ]
	Master	[ ]
	Doctorate	[ ]
Year of experience		
	Less than 5	[ ]
	6-10 years	[ ]
	11-15 years	[ ]
	16-20 years	[ ]
	Above 21 years	[ ]
Age		
	18-27 years	[ ]
	28-37 years	[ ]
	38-47 years	[ ]
	More than 48	[ ]
Ethnicity		
	Non-Bumiputra	[ ]
	Bumiputra	[ ]
Marital Status		
	Single	[ ]
	Married	[ ]
Mother of child		
	Yes	[ ]
	No	[ ]
Number of children		
	No child	[ ]
	1 child	[ ]
	2-3 child	[ ]
	More than 3 child	[ ]

<b>SECTION A: GENDER STEREOTYPE</b>									
9. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the five point statements.									
Strongly disagree [1]		Disagree [2]		Neutral [3]		Agree [4]		Strongly Agree [5]	
		1	2	3	4	5			
A	Women's ideas are seriously listened to and implemented in the organization.								
B	Women are considered care givers and home makers and men as bread winners and leaders.								
C	Attributes such as achievement, orientation, forcefulness and strength in decision making are commonly ascribed to men.								
D	Men perceive women as weaker counterpart.								
E	Men still assume the most authoritative and influential roles in organizations.								
<b>SECTION B: WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT</b>									
10. Please indicate the extent that you agree with the five factor statements.									
Strongly disagree [1]		Disagree [2]		Neutral [3]		Agree [4]		Strongly Agree [5]	
		1	2	3	4	5			
A	Husbands do not support their spouse's careers.								
B	Women of child bearing ages tend to be by passed for promotion and other opportunities.								
C	Many women leave organizations to spend more time with their families.								
D	Breaks in employment such as maternity leave/ caring for dependents slow down women career progression.								
E	Lack of support from family and friends impede women career progress.								
<b>SECTION C: SOCIAL CULTURAL BELIEFS</b>									
11. Please indicate the extent that you agree with the five factor statements.									
Strongly disagree [1]		Disagree [2]		Neutral [3]		Agree [4]		Strongly Agree [5]	
		1	2	3	4	5			
A	Cultural beliefs are hostile to women career advancement.								
B	Men do not like sharing authority with women.								
C	Traditional attitude of women as weaker sex has an effect on their career progress.								
D	As a woman I feel discriminated because of my sex.								
E	It violates societal norms for a woman to work outside the home.								
<b>SECTION D: INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>									
12. Please indicate the extent that you agree with the five factor statements.									



Strongly disagree [1]		Disagree [2]	Neutral [3]	Agree [4]	Strongly Agree [5]			
				1	2	3	4	5
A	Women lack education required for holding leadership positions.							
B	Women lack professional confidence and have low self-esteem.							
C	Women do not favorably compete with men for senior positions.							
D	Women felt their traits as weak and passive.							
E	Women are less equipped in skills or temperament to handle the arduous role of a senior manager.							

### SECTION E: ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

13. Please indicate the extent that you agree with the five factor statements.

15. Please indicate the extent that you agree with the five factor statements.								
Strongly disagree [1]		Disagree [2]	Neutral [3]	Agree [4]	Strongly Agree [5]			
				1	2	3	4	5
A	Women receive fewer opportunities for professional development at work.							
B	Organizations lack policies to support women career progression.							
C	It is not easy for women to establish informal networks.							
D	Lack of understanding among employers of the value of gender diversity at senior levels impedes women career progress.							
E	Employers lack commitment to creating an environment in which female executives excel.							

### SECTION F: WOMEN'S CAREER PROGRESSION BARRIERS

13. Please indicate the extent that you agree with the five factor statements.

Strongly disagree [1]		Disagree [2]	Neutral [3]	Agree [4]	Strongly Agree [5]				
				1	2	3	4	5	
A	Women who have progressed in their career have the relevant work experience.								
B	Most women in senior positions have advanced their education levels and have appropriate training.								
C	Most women in senior positions change their institutions.								
D	Women who progress have high aspirations and career goals.								
E	Women who progress demonstrate competency on the job producing high quality work.								
F	Women who progress have high interpersonal / people skills.								
G	Women who progress is committed/dedicated/perseverance.								
H	Women who progress are given opportunity and support								

	from the company.					
I	Women who progress are hard working.					
J	Most women who progress have self- confidence.					

